CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 10 February 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Harald Kreid (Austria)

GE.00-60497 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 841st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have two speakers inscribed on my list today. I give the floor to the first speaker, who is the Ambassador of Cuba, Ambassador Carlos Amat Fores.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor under your presidency for the first time, allow me to begin my statement by congratulating you sincerely on the work that you have done and to take this opportunity to reiterate my delegation's full support and cooperation in the performance of your task. I extend my congratulations to your predecessor for the work that he did and we also express our readiness to continue cooperating positively with your successor as President. I would also like to thank the secretariat staff and the team of translators and interpreters for the irreplaceable support they give us in accomplishing our work.

We are beginning a new session of the Conference on Disarmament in an international situation that bears no relation to the one which was generated by the most optimistic ideas in the field of disarmament at the beginning of the last decade, ideas which proliferated at the end of the cold war and, following elementary logic, held out, among other things, the possibility of achieving the final and complete elimination of nuclear weapons. I speak of elementary logic because with the end of the cold war it appeared that the cause of the uncontrolled build-up of nuclear arsenals in the world would disappear. Though I must confess that in Cuba we always viewed that optimism with some reservations.

Now everything appears clearer. It is regrettable and deeply disturbing that those optimistic ideas did not reflect the reality in which we have always lived, a reality that is now harshly apparent from various recent events such as, for example, NATO's adoption of a new strategic concept that not only reiterates the foundations of the unacceptable and indefensible doctrine of nuclear deterrence, but also proclaims that organization's right to intervene militarily all over the world, which can lead and has already led to breaches and contraventions of the principles and norms set forth in the United Nations Charter. I could cite other examples which illustrate that dangerous reality, but I prefer to refer to a few of them later.

Mr. President, I do not wish to omit to convey to you the appreciation of my delegation for the efforts you are making to reach an agreement among the members of the Conference on the adoption of a programme of work for this session. In the international situation to which I referred earlier, the role of the Conference on Disarmament is increasing. It is becoming imperative to heed the calls from the international community expressed through the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, among other forums. For several years resolutions have been adopted in that body requesting the Conference to establish an ad hoc committee on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Last year this Conference was once again asked, in resolution 54/54 P, to establish such a mechanism on a priority basis.

(Mr. Amat Fores, Cuba)

My country reiterates its firm support for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, and that will continue to be my delegation's highest priority in this forum. How can it be claimed that negotiations on nuclear weapons are only a matter for bilateral formats when such weapons threaten the whole of humankind? If nuclear weapons were to be used at some point in the future, be it by conscious decision, faulty operation, accident or miscalculation, they will not discriminate between possessors and non-possessors, between combatants and non-combatants, and nuclear weapons would even be incapable of differentiating between those who, in this beautiful room, favour or oppose the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. In such an unhappy event all of us would suffer the same fate.

Cuba, as a member of the Group of 21, to which it has the honour to belong, has set out its ideas on the programme of work in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571, which contain the Group's position on the matter. These proposals are clear and express the will of the Group of 21 to begin negotiations immediately to eliminate for ever the latent danger represented by the possession of nuclear weapons by certain Powers. Some believe that that position is not realistic, and have even stated that it is out of step with the present. So our delegation asks itself what is real. Perhaps the only possible reality is to pursue negotiations which will lead to new non-proliferation instruments that will perpetuate the discriminatory and unacceptable division between States which possess and those which do not possess nuclear weapons, while new sophisticated arms are developed and advanced technological solutions are sought which will in practice make it possible to improve nuclear weapons, in terms of both quality and quantity.

Perhaps reality in nuclear disarmament means the promotion of the deployment of new anti-missile defence systems that threaten to weaken the present agreements on the control of strategic nuclear weapons and the prospects of further reductions in strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals; or reality means waiting another 30 years or more to see how, in spite of the passage of time, there will have been no "negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control", in the words of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty which, although Cuba does not participate in it, believing it to be a discriminatory instrument which establishes, apparently for ever, two different categories of States, understands the frustrations that many countries feel with the selective way in which, in our opinion, this instrument is applied.

This Conference cannot continue year after year to find itself prevented from beginning negotiations on what remains the highest priority in the field of disarmament - nuclear disarmament, as enshrined among the objectives and priorities laid down by the United Nations in the final declaration and Programme of Action of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which are still fully in force.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, in resolution 54/53, entitled "Prevention of the arms race in outer space", which was adopted with the support of almost all the Members of the United Nations, and, even more significantly, without opposition from any of them, also

(Mr. Amat Fores, Cuba)

reiterates "that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects", and invites the Conference to re-establish an ad hoc committee for this purpose. It is therefore both paradoxical and frustrating that we are not capable of fulfilling the commitments we have entered into vis-à-vis the international community in the very forum it has chosen to begin negotiations on issues related to disarmament and arms control. Of course, it is implicit in my analysis that in order to begin any negotiating exercise it is vital that we should all display the necessary political will and spirit of flexibility if we are to achieve the noble objectives and goals that are urged upon us.

Cuba has always advocated nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This is why all our programmes for the use of nuclear energy are directed to its peaceful exploitation and are placed under safeguards agreements with IAEA. This is the expression shown of our country's and our Government's vocation for peace. Following that vocation, we have recently signed an additional protocol to our safeguards agreements with IAEA, based on the model protocol adopted by that agency. This represents a concrete contribution to a strengthened, efficient and effective international safeguards regime. In so doing Cuba became the first country with INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreements to sign a protocol of this nature with IAEA.

We would also like to take this opportunity to refer to other important topics in the field of disarmament and arms control which are currently on the table. We are dealing with one of them in a nearby room. I refer to the negotiations on the protocol which is intended to strengthen the Convention on Biological Weapons. Our country is following those negotiations with great interest and is taking an active part in the work of the Ad Hoc Group. We appreciate the progress reached in that forum and stand ready to continue contributing to those negotiations in a positive and constructive manner, so that we can conclude a protocol which is universal and effective before the Fifth Review Conference on the Convention, as decided at the previous Conference.

Secondly, while emphasizing that we attach the highest priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament, Cuba shares the concerns related to the illicit traffic in small arms and supports the initiatives that are being pursued at the bilateral, regional and multilateral level in search of negotiated solutions to this phenomenon. All these initiatives must take into account the particular circumstances and situation of each country or region and avoid the blind application of remedies. A suitable forum to address this set of problems in detail will be the international conference on the illicit arms trade that is due to take place in the year 2001. The scope of the conference must be limited to the illicit aspects of the arms trade, as recommended by the United Nations General Assembly. The Preparatory Committee for the conference will begin its work very soon, and my country is preparing to participate actively in its work in the hope of reaching fruitful results.

(Mr. Amat Fores, Cuba)

Finally, I would like to reiterate the delegation of Cuba's interest in this forum's beginning its substantive work, and in that context, as I have said, we will not support approaches that hide behind a veil of pragmatism and which, in the final analysis, merely respond to certain very limited individual interests. Nor will we support the isolating of, selective approaches to, some subjects at the expense of negotiations on others of equal or greater priority and importance.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Hu Xiaodi.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): The Chinese delegation attaches great importance to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and maintains that the CD should re-establish an ad hoc committee under this agenda item to commence substantive negotiations. My delegation has on many occasions stated this position and tabled a specific proposal in March last year which appeared as document CD/1576. Today, upon the instructions from the Chinese Government, I submit a working paper entitled "China's position on and suggestions for ways to address the issue of prevention of an arms race in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament". Yesterday, I requested the Secretary-General to circulate it as an official document of the CD.

I shall briefly outline the main elements of the working paper. There are four parts: our views on how to address the issue of PAROS at the CD, our views on the existing international legal instruments concerning PAROS, China's position on PAROS and tentative ideas on the new international legal instruments.

First, our views on how to address PAROS at the CD. As the single multilateral negotiating body the CD should concentrate on the most pressing and prominent issues that have the greatest bearing on international peace and security in the twenty-first century. PAROS is just such an issue and has every reason to be one of the highest priorities on the CD's agenda.

The United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session once again adopted by an overwhelming majority a resolution on PAROS. The resolution reiterates that the CD has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and invites the CD to re-establish an ad hoc committee as early as possible during this year's session. The fact that no country voted against the resolution amply reflects the common aspiration and strong desire of the international community to prevent an arms race in outer space. In a related move, the General Assembly last year adopted, again by an overwhelming majority, a resolution on preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems.

(Mr. Hu, China)

Since the CD put PAROS on its agenda in 1982 it has, through the ad hoc committee and otherwise, conducted useful work on issues such as relevant definitions, principles, existing treaties and confidence-creating measures. Given the present grave situation the CD has every reason to re-establish an ad hoc committee on PAROS and commence substantive work without delay.

Thus the Chinese delegation maintains that as proposed in CD/1576, the CD should re-establish an ad hoc committee under agenda item 3, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument banning the testing, deployment and use of any weapons, weapon systems and their components in outer space, with a view to preventing the weaponization of outer space.

In carrying out its mandate, the ad hoc committee should take into consideration all relevant present and future developments and specific proposals tabled by all sides. As a preliminary step towards the negotiation and conclusion of international legal instruments, it may also discuss all other relevant issues, such as current military activities and relevant developments and their impact on efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space; the shortcomings of existing international legal instruments; concepts and definitions related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and the basic elements of the future international legal instruments.

The Chinese delegation has taken note of the many ideas and suggestions on PAROS put to the Conference by various parties. We are of the view that the new ad hoc committee should be an open-ended all-embracing mechanism within which all sides can freely express their views. It should be given the negotiation and conclusion of an international legal instrument or instruments on the prevention of the weaponization of and an arms race in outer space as a clear direction and ultimate goal.

Secondly, the issue of the existing international legal instruments. There are several international legal instruments of relevance to the outer space issue, such as the 1963 partial test-ban treaty, the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, and the 1972 ABM Treaty between the United States and the USSR. However, they have been ineffective in preventing the weaponization of outer space or an arms race in outer space. Some have provided for limited prohibitions and contain many loopholes and ambiguities. Some have not been fully complied with or risk being violated, amended or abrogated. Therefore the Chinese delegation believes that the international community, while making efforts to strengthen the existing international legal instruments, also needs to negotiate new international legal instruments to achieve the goal of non-weaponization of and prevention of an arms race in outer space. The new international legal instrument to be concluded should include as basic elements a ban on the testing, deployment and use of any weapon system or components thereof in outer space, and limits on the use of satellites for military purposes.

Thirdly, China's basic position on PAROS. As long ago as in 1985, China submitted to the first ad hoc committee on PAROS a position paper (CD/579) which outlined its basic

(Mr. Hu, China)

positions in this regard. It has always maintained that the exploration and use of outer space should only serve to promote the economic, scientific and cultural development of all countries and benefit all mankind; it has always opposed an arms race of any kind, in outer space or elsewhere. This principled position remains unchanged. We emphasize that the Powers with the greatest space capabilities bear a special responsibility for preventing an arms race in outer space. Countries must undertake not to test, deploy or use any weapon systems or components in space.

Fourthly, tentative ideas on new international legal instruments. For the moment the Chinese delegation believes that the new international legal instruments to prevent the weaponization of, and an arms race in outer space ought to include purposes, basic obligations, definitions, national implementation measures, international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, verification measures, appropriate measures for the resolution of disputes, transparency measures, and the procedural articles commonly found in international instruments such as articles on amendment, signature, ratification and entry into force. Our working paper gives the main features of these articles, so I will not repeat them here.

The Chinese delegation wishes to emphasize that these are only preliminary ideas that may help inspire thoughts, promote further discussion and consideration in this regard, and facilitate further negotiations. My delegation will actively participate in such discussions and negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement. This concludes the list of speakers for today. Does any delegation want to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case.

I would therefore now turn to the question of our programme of work. I regret to have to inform you that none of the three options which I submitted in an informal context to the Conference gained unanimous support. The draft declaration which I circulated yesterday morning with regard to the appointment of two special coordinators under decision CD/1036, paragraph 5 (d), did not, for technical reasons, reach all groups in time to be discussed in yesterday's group meetings. In the Presidential consultations held yesterday afternoon, the Coordinator of the G-21 informed me that his group, while maintaining its formal position presented in its statement made in the plenary meeting of 27 January, could accept the appointment of the two special coordinators as a stand-alone decision. In addition, the group made a number of changes to the text, which in the meantime should have been brought to the attention of all delegations.

We are therefore confronted by a new situation. The consultations which I have since conducted have shown - not surprisingly - that several delegations will need to seek new instructions from their capitals and will require to come to a decision. Under these circumstances, I am not in a position to carry the matter any further at this point. Much as I deplore it, I have no choice but to leave it for consideration at a later stage. Although the rule quoted in decision CD/1036 stipulates, or implies, that a decision on the appointment of the special coordinator or coordinators should be taken in the second half of the first presidency of

(The President)

each session, in the one case on record when this rule was applied, in 1991, the appointment was made by the second President of the year's session. My successor, provided that he intends to follow this course and provided he can obtain the support of the Conference, would thus be able to take up, based on this precedent, the same question during his term of office.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I see the representative of Mexico. Ambassador de Icaza, you have the floor.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, I have listened to your summary of the present situation very carefully and I very much fear that the record may give an impression that it was the attitude of the Group of 21 that prevented a decision being taken on your draft declaration appointing two special coordinators. I am taking the floor to make it absolutely clear that in yesterday's Presidential consultations the coordinator of one group stated that in his group there was no agreement on that draft declaration, that another coordinator said that he had not been able to distribute the draft declaration to all members of his group and that the G.21 was the only one to come up with a positive and constructive response to your proposal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of Mexico and I appreciate his clarification. It was not my intention to create the impression that the problem rests with the Group of 21. I was just pointing out that from them we had received a reply - a positive reply, as I said - with some text amendments which, however, need time to be studied. I have also expressed the view that the process has not come to an end and could be continued by my successor, who will be fully aware of the positions of other groups because they are, I trust, reflected in the reports that reached you from the group coordinators.

I now give the floor to the delegation of the United Kingdom - Ambassador Soutar.

Mr. SOUTAR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have asked for the floor during your presidency, may I begin by expressing the appreciation of my delegation for the energy and determination with which you have performed your crucial role at a particularly challenging time? May I also, with regret, offer the commiseration of my delegation that your efforts on our behalf have not been translated into agreement on a substantive work programme for the Conference?

The United Kingdom finds this state of affairs deeply disappointing. We approached this year's session with the same key objective we have held for a number of years: the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). I was therefore heartened by the report which Ambassador Luck made to the Conference at our first meeting on 18 January, describing the outcome of the inter-sessional consultations he had conducted jointly with you, Mr. President. In that report, he spoke of a strongly dominant sentiment among delegations that the Conference should commence forthwith on a programme of work, and that the informal proposals outlined by Ambassador Dembri last year remained our

(Mr. Soutar, United Kingdom)

point of departure. On the same occasion you yourself, Mr. President, made it clear that you too saw the way forward as a search for agreement on the two outstanding issues of nuclear disarmament and outer space.

In your subsequent consultations, you were to bring forward for consideration a number of options, one of which would have permitted the appointment of special coordinators to deal with the issues of nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, while allowing the Conference to agree on a work programme, including the establishment of an ad hoc committee for negotiations on an FMCT. This would have at last allowed those States parties to the NPT who are also members of this Conference to fulfil the commitment, set out in the programme of action in the "Principles and objectives" document agreed at the Non-Proliferation (NPT) Review and Extension Conference in 1995, to undertake cut-off negotiations.

Five years on, that common objective remains unfulfilled. The importance of an FMCT has not diminished in the intervening period. Indeed, events in the closing years of the last century have underlined its necessity. In our view, it remains the case that before there can be an effective and verifiable ban on nuclear weapons globally, there must be confidence that no new fissile material for such weapons can be produced. An FMCT would deliver such an assurance, and in so doing, put in place a vital foundation for the achievement of global nuclear disarmament.

The United Kingdom was therefore dismayed when informal consultations revealed that one delegation was no longer prepared to be bound by a commitment solemnly entered into five years ago, making the achievement of consensus on this particular option impossible. Those who try to place obstacles in the way of an FMCT negotiation do nothing to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament, and only call into question the sincerity of their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Another unfortunate victim of this development is that the Conference has been unable to reappoint a special coordinator or coordinators on the reform issues: review of the agenda, expansion of its membership, and improved and effective functioning.

In informal consultations last week, I made the point that the consensus rule provides an essential safeguard for the interests of individual delegations. But I also said that the consensus rule should not be allowed to become a straitjacket, choking off the possibility of substantive work where there is a real demand for it. Like our distinguished former colleague, Ambassador Péter Náray of Hungary, I begin to fear that the word "consensus" may get a new meaning if the Conference continues the practices we have seen established over the past two years.

The United Kingdom would therefore like to lend its voice to the increasing chorus of delegations who have called for reform of our procedures. I am not so naive as to believe that mere reform of procedures would necessarily of itself lead to accelerated progress on the substantive items of our agenda. Your informal consultations have shown only too clearly how

(Mr. Grey, United States)

dramatically in the nearly 28 years since the ABM Treaty was signed. The threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction using advanced means of delivery is real, growing, and increasingly unpredictable. The spread of these technologies should not have happened, but regrettably it did. Those who allowed it to happen should have known what the consequences would be.

The United States is considering a limited system to defend against such threats. We have made clear that we are committed to work with Russia, in a spirit of cooperation against a threat we both face, to identify adaptations of the ABM Treaty that would make its provisions consistent with a limited national missile defence. Our two countries have amended the ABM Treaty before, and bilateral discussions on START and ABM issues are continuing, including here in Geneva, even as the CD continues to squander its time.

There are reasons to wonder at the source of this criticism. Four of the five nuclear-weapon States have reduced their holdings of these weapons and increased transparency. The other nuclear-weapon State is modernizing its forces and is not increasing its transparency. This same State decided to "test"-fire missiles in 1996 in response to political developments of which it did not approve, and it has been building new missile fields in locations that raise concerns. Yet this State's representatives accuse the United States of practising hegemonism and seeking unilateral security at the expense of the security of other States. And they are calling into question an open, orderly process aimed at finding necessary adaptations that can keep a long-standing arms control agreement relevant and effective.

The United States has a long history in arms control and disarmament. We have negotiated and implemented many agreements and continue to do so. Here in the CD the United States has already shown considerable flexibility on important elements of our programme of work. In the spirit of making practical progress in areas where we know consensus exists, it is time for other CD members to show similar flexibility. If the CD does not get down to work, it will confirm my authorities' suspicions that this is because some governments do not want it to work.

The United States supports the efforts your delegation will be making, Madam President, to reach consensus on the CD's programme of work. We are ready to work closely with you, and if necessary, with your successors, to create the conditions that will allow the Conference to resume negotiations on FMC. Conducting negotiations is the CD's main business, and the world at large will judge our success or failure by how well we do that job.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Grey for his statement and also for the kind words he addressed to the Chair and for his words of support.

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? This does not seem to be the case.

(The President)

I should now like to take up for a decision the request from Armenia to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during this session, without first considering it at an informal plenary meeting. This request is contained in document CD/WP.508, which is before you. May I take it that the Conference agrees to this request?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 24 February 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

(Mr. Soutar, United Kingdom)

the road to progress can be blocked in the absence of the necessary political commitment. But I would recall the words of the distinguished Ambassador of Chile who told us last year that even in unpromising external circumstances, the Conference could emerge from its state of paralysis. He went on to suggest some simple modifications to our operating procedures which, without altering the current procedural framework, would nonetheless allow the Conference to carry out some ground-breaking work to prepare for eventual negotiations.

The regrettable failure of the consultative process which you had launched on the work programme, Mr. President, strongly suggests to my delegation that there would be merit in taking up the ideas put forward by the Ambassador of Chile, and my delegation would be prepared to work on these and other ideas with like-minded delegations, even if for the time being progress on the substantive items of our work programme remains blocked. I would suggest that this would be a modest but unmistakable signal that some members of the Conference at least are prepared to try to live up to the responsibilities laid upon the Conference by the international community.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Soutar for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Romania, Ambassador Maxim.

Mr. MAXIM (Romania) (translated from French): As you announced just now, Mr. President, it is true that our Mission was cut off from the world yesterday morning because of a technical fault which prevented us from receiving communications and even from sending communications to other missions. Thanks to the secretariat we were able to catch up, and yesterday evening we were in a position to send to our colleagues who are members of the Eastern European group the text which you distributed yesterday as well as the text that was prepared by the Group of 21. This morning we were able to discuss these two texts briefly. I am in a position to tell you that the Eastern European group is in principle in agreement with the two proposals. The group would certainly have needed to discuss things in more detail, but given the situation you referred to just now, apparently we will no longer have time to talk together about this matter. Nevertheless, as I said, in a spirit of flexibility and cooperation, the members of our group have given their agreement in principle and wish to cooperate and contribute further in order to arrive at a generally acceptable solution.

I would like to take this opportunity, Sir, to thank you yet again for the efforts which you have been making during your term of offfice to arrive at a solution, and I would also like to assure the incoming President of cooperation on the part of the members of our group.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Maxim for his statement. I congratulate you on the manner in which you caught up with the information and conveyed it to your group and came to a very positive reaction, for which I also want to thank the Group through its Coordinator.

I now have on my list the Ambassador of France.

Mr. de la FORTELLE (France) (translated from French): I, too, wish to thank you very much, in my turn, Mr. President, for all the efforts you have made during your term of office - many repeated efforts which showed great force of character and intelligence. My delegation is all the sorrier, then, to see that it is highly likely that these efforts will lead nowhere. I do not think there is any point in trying to blame anybody. What I would like to do is to assure you of my delegation's good will. Adopting what might be called option 4, involving simply the appointment of two special coordinators on nuclear disarmament and space, is far from ideal, and far from satisfactory to my delegation, because, as a previous speaker said, that option takes no account of the priority attached to the FMCT. To pay tribute yet again to your efforts and try to give them a specific follow-up, let me say two things. On the one hand, my delegation is prepared to accept your initial draft declaration, and secondly, if divergences on that declaration due to other groups, or another group, cannot be overcome, it might perhaps be possible to do without a declaration and, drawing on your prerogatives, to designate two special coordinators before the end of your tenure without a declaration, or else with a minimum declaration involving a simple reference to document CD/1036, paragraph 5 (d), and then give your opinion on how long the mission of these two coordinators might last and how often they might report to the Conference on Disarmament. Maybe this could still offer a way out - I very much hope so, and in any event I thank you once again and convey to you every good wish until the last day of your term of office.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador de la Fortelle for his statement and I interpret it as support to the presidency, for which I am very grateful. Unfortunately, I have had to accept that the trend of the Conference is not exactly to expand the role and the competence of the President but to limit them as much as possible by an interpretation of the rules which is going in favour of the Conference as such and the consensus rule. I think Ambassador Soutar in his statement before pointed out the situation, which I personally also believe is very unfortunate because the little movement and headway we could make with the help of the presidency is hampered to a large extent by these developments.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): In the course of the first plenary session this year, in conjunction with the adoption of the agenda, my delegation already expressed misgivings and concern about the manner in which the Conference is conducting its business. Our protracted procedural squabbles have contributed nothing to dispelling these misgivings. While it is legitimate that delegations may have different interpretations of the rules of procedure, we must nevertheless not forget that rules of procedure are there to facilitate our work and not to complicate it. Against this backdrop, we appreciate and commend your efforts, Mr. President, to overcome differences and to move us forward to substantive work.

I think the first step we should be able to take is at least to reappoint the special coordinators and all of them on which agreement already existed last year. As I mentioned earlier and other delegations as well, these are, among others, on transparency in armaments, on APMs, but also on the reform of the Conference and on the agenda. We have in our decision on the agenda a reference to consultations on review, and I wonder when these consultations will

(Mr. Seibert, Germany)

take place if we do not have the instruments to carry out these consultations. So I would hope that at our next meeting we will be able to re-establish the special coordinators as a first step - and this would be perfectly in harmony with paragraph 5 (d) of CD/1036 - and then move on to further substantive discussions.

My delegation, like the United Kingdom delegation, is strongly committed to the purposes of this Conference and also to the "Principles and objectives" and the programme established therein, and I would do everything in order fulfil this commitment. I hope that we will muster the political will and determination to move this Conference out of the existing stalemate.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): On the issue of the programme of work, I would like to make the following comments. Since this is an official meeting, my comments are for the record. First of all, China considers that the CD should respond to the demands placed upon it by the General Assembly and respond to the hope and aspirations of the international community. In other words, it should embark on negotiations on PAROS and nuclear disarmament. Under the circumstances, we also need to begin negotiations on the FMCT.

The Chinese delegation considers it regrettable that because some delegations refuse to negotiate on PAROS and nuclear disarmament we cannot agree on the programme of work.

If we are obliged to designate special coordinators, then after thorough consideration of your proposal of 9 February for a draft declaration, and the text and model put forward by the Group of 21 the same afternoon, my delegation finds the latter the more reasonable. Consequently, the delegation of China supports the text and wording proposed on the afternoon of 9 February by the Group of 21. I would like to emphasize that this does not mean that the Chinese delegation has changed its basic position on item 1.

Thirdly, I would like to clarify an issue to avoid any misunderstanding. The Chinese delegation considers that within the CD a variety of parties regard PAROS, nuclear disarmament and FMCT as priority issues on the programme of work. The only way of dealing with the three issues is to treat them, thoroughly and comprehensively. Even if we accept the designation of two special coordinators to work on the organizational and jurisdictional aspects of PAROSand nuclear disarmament, our delegation still feels that FMCT must be a component of a complete solution to the matter. On the basis of this principle, my delegation will continue its cooperation with you, Sir, and with your successor and with the two special coordinators, in search of a comprehensive, balanced, and therefore fair and reasonable solution to the questions of PAROS, nuclear disarmament and FMCT. I thank you, Sir.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of China for his statement. Maybe it opens up perspectives to my successor, if I listened carefully.

I now have on my list the representative of the Russian Federation. Ambassador Sidorov, you have the floor.

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): Since we are in the final days of your tenure as President, Sir, I would to express our delegation's gratitude to you for your recent attempts to find a way out of the deadlock in which the Conference on Disarmament has regrettably found itself for so long.

At this meeting I would like to indicate Russia's priorities in the work of the Conference on Disarmament to ensure that the participants in the Conference have a better understanding. I wish to say that our main priority in the work of the Conference has recently been and still remains work to prevent an arms race in outer space. We have always considered that life itself, the very circumstances, the very events of recent times should bring home to the Conference on Disarmament the urgent need to tackle this problem. We have frequently had an opportunity, in this room, in the General Assembly and elsewhere, to set out our concerns on the state of affairs in this area. I wish to remind you that on the initiative of Russia and a number of other delegations, a resolution was adopted at the last session of the General Assembly on the situation with regard to the ABM Treaty. Events in the last few months have not only not diminished the urgency of this topic, but have made it even more topical. For that reason the Russian delegation has called and continues to call for the setting up of an ad hoc committee on the PAROS issue in the Conference on Disarmament, and we consider that it is such an important topic that it needs to be resolved without delay. In one of the forthcoming formal meetings of the Conference on Disarmament, the Russian Federation intends to make a special statement of that issue.

Another of our priorities will certainly remain the re-establishment of the committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material, which, as we know, was created in 1998. We regret that to date, despite fairly intensive consultations, negotiations, the CD has not yet managed to get down to work, substantive work, on these two issues. We understand the difficulties experienced by individual delegations on particular issues. The Russian delegation has been trying to ease the task of the President, in seeking consensus. That is why, in showing flexibility in our approach and at the same time maintaining our positions of principle, naturally, we were ready to support your option 1, Sir, which you distributed a few days ago. In the same spirit, pursuing the aim of seeking and finding a way out of the deadlock, we are ready to support your proposal to designate two special coordinators in accordance with decision 1036 of the Conference on Disarmament. We would like to express the hope, Sir, that the future Presidents of the Conference will continue those consultations, and we wish you in the days remaining and the Ambassador of Bangladesh in the days to come success in those efforts.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Sidorov for his statement, for the kind words addressed to me and for the flexibility and constructive cooperation of his delegation during my tenure.

I think the list of speakers is exhausted. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. I would therefore, with your permission, come to a few concluding remarks.

(The President)

We are now in the fourth year of blockade, yet the situation this year is not identical with previous years. I will refrain from trying to evaluate whether it is more difficult than before or not. Once again, the Conference has been the seismograph of events in the global context. Nobody could have expected anything else. We are not operating in an ivory tower; we reflect in this setting here the wider issues and stakes, and we should not complain about it because it is our raison d'être.

I was under no illusion when I assumed the presidency that we would overcome the existing obstacles. My expectations were quite modest and muted. Nevertheless, I interpreted my mandate in a sense that everything had to be tried in order to exploit any room for manoeuvre or, if it turned out that there was none, to demonstrate this as clearly as possible to all participants.

Well, now we know where we stand. I believe this is a prerequisite for further work. What could that further work consist of? This is a more difficult question to answer. The Conference, for its own good reasons, has disdained second-best solutions which would indeed have been available in the form of a reduced programme of work. In deciding against the adoption of such a reduced or lean programme of work which would not have contained any of the three items each of which is essential to a number of delegations, we would not have achieved much, but at least we would have been able to take up work in some areas. We would not have negotiated an arms control treaty, that is true, but I still believe that we would have been able to do some useful work. The Conference preferred to bide its time until the current situation changes, waiting for a breakthrough at a later date. It is a perfectly respectable decision, but, of course, one could not have expected the President himself to adopt such a position of wait-and-see at the very outset. For the President, the task consists in pointing out avenues of compromise, both substantive and procedural ones.

I take it with equanimity that not everybody agreed with the way in which I proceeded. It s the inevitable risk you run in this position. Yet I have not represented the interests of any articular group. The overriding motive of my efforts was to get the Conference out of the mpasse in which it has found itself for some time already, for too much time indeed. The end f he road which we have now reached is heavily barrricaded. To break through this barricade is ot within the power of the presidency. It is only possible by the concerted effort of all of us.

At this point I should like to thank all of you, those who accepted my proposals but also those who rejected them, those who supported me in my efforts and those who could find little merit in them, because they all spent much time in meetings and consultations on the initiatives of the presidency. I should like to thank the secretariat, first and foremost Director-General Vladimir Petrovsky, for his unfailing encouragement and shared concern for the future of this

(The President)

organization; Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for his discreet advice; and to all other members of the secretariat, including the interpreters, for their patience and dedication. As I hand over this presidency to my successor, Ambassador Iftekhar Chowdhury of Bangladesh, I can only wish him well. Knowing his irrespressibly good spirits and his personal style of charm diplomacy, he might be luckier than I have been in arriving at a result. This, at least, is what I wish him.

The next plenary meeting therefore will take place, as usual, on Thursday, 17 February, at 10 a.m. in this room.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.